

Nearly 30 Million Americans Still Without Health-Insurance Coverage

In just the first few months of this year, nearly two million people dropped their Obamacare coverage. According to a new report released by the Administration, 12.2 million people signed up for coverage through the Obamacare exchanges in 2017. But enrollment has already fallen to just 10.3 million people.

“The American people know a bad deal when they see one, and that’s why they’re avoiding Obamacare like the plague.”

Vice President Mike Pence



Obamacare is failing the American people. After projecting to cover 23 million people in 2010, it has covered less than half that. Despite the inaccurate forecasts of the previous administration, a mere 10.3 million Americans had Obamacare coverage on March 15, 2017. Nearly 30 million Americans are still without health-insurance coverage. Vice President Pence is optimistic that the new administration can, and will, do better.

“Under President Donald Trump, we will rescue the American people from the disaster of Obamacare and give the American people the world-class healthcare that they deserve.”

Vice President Mike Pence

Press Releases: Remarks at the Plenary Session of the Organization of American States General Assembly

Remarks

John J. Sullivan

Deputy Secretary of State

Cancun, Mexico
June 20, 2017

DEPUTY SECRETARY SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. President, distinguished heads of delegations, participants in this general assembly, ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank – start by thanking President Pena Nieto, Foreign Minister Videgaray, and the people of Mexico for hosting this year's general assembly. I also want to thank Secretary General Almagro for his leadership and for organizing this 47th general assembly for the OAS.

I have four brief but important points.

The first is a statement of the United States goals for engagement in the Americas for mutual security and shared prosperity. The United States recognizes the importance of our partnerships with our neighbors and friends in the Western Hemisphere. Our partnerships in this region are vital to our economic competitiveness and our ability to solve our shared security challenges. We're prepared to work with all nations to further this common agenda. Enduring prosperity and our common security require effective democratic institutions that respond to the needs of and deliver results for our populations.

We all require strong institutions that help to provide economic and social opportunity and safeguard citizens' security. We share many common goals in these areas, including working together to combat transnational crime of all kinds. No nation can flourish economically or strengthen its democratic institutions if people are afraid to open a business, attend school, visit a doctor, or congregate in a city square. The United States understands that by working together and recognizing shared responsibilities, we can address this challenge and others.

Second, the United States strongly supports the role of the OAS and is committed to the success of its important work. The OAS electoral observation missions throughout the hemisphere ensure that governments honor the voices of their people. The Inter-American Human Rights System performs an essential role in offering a line of defense against abuses. The Secretariat of Multidimensional Security does important work to improve law enforcement and promotes transparency in judicial systems. The OAS mission to support the peace process in Colombia plays a critical role in monitoring the implementation of the process and ensuring commitments are met. And we are proud to support the OAS mission against corruption in Honduras, and we hope that other nations will demonstrate this type of aggressive anti-corruption effort.

The third issue is Venezuela. The United States remains committed to working with OAS member-states to face what is a great challenge: helping the people of Venezuela find a peaceful, democratic, and lasting solution to that

country's current crisis. The OAS has a critical role to play. The Inter-American Democratic Charter remains an essential element of the inter-American system that our nations created together. Today we recall the charter and the commitment of our countries to uphold and defend democracy. We've all been alarmed by the dramatic deterioration of democratic norms in Venezuela, as well as the attendant violence in which many people have died. As neighbors and fellow citizens of the Americas, we can no longer stand by and watch this suffering, nor can we ignore the denial of basic freedoms like freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and political participation. The Inter-American Democratic Charter was designed for moments like this, and the responsibility falls to us to show the kind of leadership the people of our hemisphere deserve.

The United States has joined with a growing number of courageous democracies in our region to urge the Venezuelan Government to hold free elections, respect the independence of the national assembly, release all political prisoners, and directly address the country's humanitarian crisis. We join with these partners in recognizing that the principle of nonintervention cannot be used to justify inaction or avoid responsibility.

Yesterday's discussion highlighted the growing alarm among Venezuela's neighbors. The United States joins with many allies in condemning efforts to undermine Venezuela's constitution by convoking a constituent assembly absent a popular referendum required by Venezuela's own constitution. Our common goal remains to help the people of Venezuela return to peace and prosperity with a full restoration of the rule of law and respect for freedom, political expression, and participation. The United States supports the establishment of an action-oriented contact group of governments, in accordance with the principles of the OAS Charter and in the spirit of the Democratic Charter.

My final point concerns Caribbean strategic engagement. I want to highlight this renewed critical area of focus for the United States. Recently, we sent to the United States Congress a multiyear strategy for the Caribbean, the Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act. Our strategy established – establishes a broad-based framework for deepening our multilateral cooperation in forums such as the OAS for enhancing the United States partnership with the region in the areas of security, diplomacy, prosperity, energy, education, and health. We look forward to working with our Caribbean partners to strengthen these areas of mutual benefit.

I conclude with a statement of appreciation for the important role of the OAS and the leadership and courage of Secretary General Almagro, as well as Mexico and other key partners, in the face of our common challenges. Secretary Almagro recently received the prestigious Freedom Award in Washington, D.C. He noted at that time that while the OAS is an organization of states, the organization's founding and its framing documents were signed in the name of our peoples. It is in that spirit that we must act today.

Thank you.

(Break.)

DEPUTY SECRETARY SULLIVAN: I just have – one minute, please, Mr. President, to respond. One minute.

My response to the statement we've just heard can be summarized in three words: distractions, distortions, and irrelevancies. The facts on the ground in Venezuela are apparent to all of us. This is a moment of challenge for this organization to prove its relevancy, to be dedicated to its charter, to do right by the people of Venezuela – not to intervene in Venezuela, but to take a modest step that has been proposed under the leadership of the foreign minister of Mexico, to take a modest step to put together a group that would help facilitate a resolution of the serious problems which we all acknowledge are present in Venezuela. If we can't take that step forward now, we seriously impair our ability in the future to go forward as an organization collectively.

Please think about the choices that are – we face now. If we leave here with no accomplishment – even the modest step that's been proposed, the modest resolution that's been proposed, not an intervention into the affairs of Venezuela, the modest step to prepare this – to authorize this group of nations, without defining who the members of that group will be, to put forward that group to help facilitate a resolution of the crisis that we all know exists in Venezuela is the least we can do to be faithful to our charter.

Thank you, Mr. President. (Applause.)

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Press Releases: Remarks at a Solo Press Availability

Remarks
John J. Sullivan

Deputy Secretary of State

Cancun, Mexico
June 20, 2017

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Good afternoon. Welcome to this press conference of the Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan. He will start with a brief declaration and then he will answer some questions. I will assign the persons that will be allowed to ask the questions. Please use your mikes.

DEPUTY SECRETARY SULLIVAN: Well, thank you very much, everyone, for being here. I'm delighted to see everyone. Good afternoon. Again, my – I'm John Sullivan, Deputy Secretary of State. I want to start by thanking President Pena Nieto and Foreign Secretary Videgaray and the people of Mexico for hosting this year's OAS General Assembly. I also want to thank Secretary General Almagro for his bold leadership of the OAS and thank him and his team for organizing this general assembly.

The Trump administration recognizes the enormous importance of our neighbors in the Americas in building long-term prosperity for the United States. Our partnerships in the Western Hemisphere are vital to our economic competitiveness and essential to our ability to solve transnational challenges and ensure stability in the region. The Trump administration is committed to working with our partners in the Americas to defeat transnational criminal organizations, keep our countries free of drugs, and end the violence, illegal arms sales, and human trafficking that are lethal byproducts of the drug trade. We know in the United States we have our own work to do in reducing demand, but we call for countries in the Western Hemisphere to quickly put new pressure on drug cartels and undertake new commitments to defeating them.

Lasting prosperity and collective security also require effective democratic institutions that deliver results for their people, provide economic and social opportunity, and safeguard citizens' security. OAS member-nations are fostering increasingly greater agreement, helping Venezuela find a peaceful, democratic, and comprehensive solution to its current problems and holding their government to account for its abuses. We all have been alarmed by the dramatic deterioration of democratic rule in Venezuela and by the violence and breakdown of civil norms that have accompanied it. On behalf of the United States, we say to the Venezuelan people that your cause is not forgotten. We stand with you in your aspirations of recovering a society that guarantees civil rights and political expression.

The Government of Venezuela must understand that attempts to silence its citizens' voices will not stop others around the world from speaking up for them. The United States joins its partners in the OAS in urging the Venezuelan Government to fulfill its commitments under the OAS Charter. These commitments include holding free elections, respecting the independence of the national assembly, releasing all of Venezuela's political prisoners, and directly addressing the humanitarian needs of the Venezuelan people. In keeping with the spirit of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, our goal remains a return to the full respect for the rule of law and the full respect for freedoms of political expression and participations in Venezuela.

We encourage all OAS nations that are committed to upholding these values in their own countries to join the United States in holding the Government of Venezuela accountable. The level of agreement between OAS partners to confront the situation in Venezuela is a win for democratic values, and we hope to maintain this level of unity as we work to solve shared security challenges and obtain prosperity for all of our citizens.

Thank you. I'd be happy to take questions.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Thank you. The first question will be for Tracy Wilkinson, the *LA Times*.

QUESTION: Hi, thank you very much. You spoke today passionately, I would say, about the need for this organization to be relevant, but you all were not able to agree – you all were not able to agree on a resolution for Venezuela. How do you explain that failure? And do you think that the recent reversal by the United States vis-a-vis Cuba has weakened your hand in a forum like this?

DEPUTY SECRETARY SULLIVAN: Well, I don't think – I wouldn't describe – this is an ongoing process. There was a meeting yesterday and a vote yesterday in which the largest number of member-states – 20 – voted for the resolution under – that's been presented, I might add, under the effective and passionate leadership of Foreign Minister Videgaray. So 20 nations voting for it is the largest number that have expressed support for such a matter, and that resolution is still under consideration in the general assembly. Under the leadership of the Mexican Government, our hosts, we are hopeful that that resolution will be presented again for a vote and passed.

As I described in my remarks at the plenary a little while ago, in my opinion, this resolution is a very modest step to address what can only be described as a humanitarian crisis in Venezuela – people being – losing their lives, repression of human and civil rights, and an economic collapse. It's really a dire situation. What the resolution does is propose that a group of so-called friends, of nations that would be – a balanced group of nations that would be interested in helping to effect a resolution of the crisis in Venezuela on behalf of the Venezuelan people.

The resolution – I characterize it as a modest step only because the resolution merely authorizes the creation of such a group without dictating who the members would be or any future steps that would be required. So it's a modest step and one – but one that we think is necessary to address this crisis.

With respect to the U.S. change in – that the President announced in its – in our policy with respect to Cuba, I'm not sure that that had any effect on votes. It hasn't been mentioned to me. I've had almost 10 – nine or 10 bilateral meetings today to discuss this resolution, and that was not raised by any country. I – so the thoughts I would leave you with are this is an ongoing process. We've got 20 votes. We're hopeful to get more. But the process is continuing under the able leadership of our hosts, the Mexican Government. Thank you.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Thank you. The second question will be for Televisa.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Yes, thank you very much. Could you tell us what is the status of this group? Is that part of the proposals that were denied a future yesterday? Or what will be your role in this group? Which will be the members and what will be the goals of this, and if this is going to be worked again in the future? And – excuse me, and what is the U.S. position? What is it that you are mostly interested in? I know that all the countries like Venezuela and Mexico have been very clear on what it is that they are interested on after the constitutional assembly in Venezuela. But for the U.S., what is the most important thing vis-a-vis the crisis in Venezuela?

DEPUTY SECRETARY SULLIVAN: Thank you. Well, as I said, the resolution is really a modest step. It doesn't, in and of itself, create or constitute the group. It merely authorizes its creation and it is not a step that the United States is taking; it's a step that the OAS is taking in our collective response to this crisis in Venezuela.

So as I said, it is a modest step. The members of that group are to be determined in future consultations among OAS members. It may include outside parties such as the Vatican or the UN. That is all to be determined. The step that's being – that was discussed yesterday and we hope will be approved and voted on here is merely authorizing the creation of such a group without defining its members in advance or its charter.

Our ultimate goal is the restoration of the rule of law and political expression, civil rights for the people of Venezuela. That's the United States – that's the United States goal in its urging the – our fellow members of the OAS to vote for this resolution as a step that we as an organization can take to facilitate a resolution of this crisis in Venezuela. It's a modest step, but one that we think is necessary.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Thank you so much. The third question will be for EFE.

QUESTION: Hi, I'd like to know that even if the resolution passed, Venezuela has already rejected any group coming from OAS, so how can it be useful?

DEPUTY SECRETARY SULLIVAN: Well, it's first of all a reaffirmation of the OAS charter and our democratic values that we all share. We hope to include other – potentially other parties could be included. The Government of Venezuela has in the past participated in a dialogue with outside groups.

It's not lived up to the commitments that it's made, so its statement now that it won't abide by any resolution that's adopted by the OAS is not surprising, but it doesn't relieve us as members of the OAS, both individually and collectively, for taking all the actions that we can to provide a means for de-escalating the violence, the chaos in Venezuela, and providing a means for facilitating a resolution by the parties, by the Venezuelans themselves. It's ultimately the Venezuelan people who will need to decide this issue because that's our commitment to democratic values.

This is not an intervention by the OAS or by the United States. It's merely an offer by countries in the region; a responsible organization, the OAS, with a charter dedicated to, among other things, promotion of human and individual rights, putting together a group of – a balanced group of countries to help facilitate a resolution of what is a serious problem in a neighboring country. And I think that's the minimum that the OAS can do to help address this situation.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Thank you very much.

DEPUTY SECRETARY SULLIVAN: Thank you.

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Press Releases: U.S. Department of State Hosts Forum on Reinforcing the Global Norm Against Chemical Weapons

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 20, 2017

On June 20, the U.S. Department of State hosted a high-level forum entitled, "The Chemical Weapons Convention 1997-2017: Progress, Challenges, and Reinforcing the Global Norm against Chemical Weapons."

Since its entry into force 20 years ago, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)—with 192 States Parties—has verified the destruction of approximately 95 percent of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles, and thereby made a significant contribution to making our world a safer place. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the CWC's implementing body,

has facilitated the destruction of chemical weapons in Albania, China, Iraq, Libya, Russia, Syria, and the United States – among others. Nonetheless, the international community's work is far from done, and serious challenges remain.

The day-long event at the U.S. Department of State examined the progress made and lessons learned in the two decades since the CWC's entry into force, and participants discussed strategies to meet ongoing and future challenges.

U.S. National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster provided keynote remarks. Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Director-General Ahmet Uzumcu also participated in the event and offered remarks.

For more information on the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance, visit www.state.gov/t/avc.

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Press Releases: Remarks With Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko Before Their Meeting

Remarks
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Treaty Room
Washington, DC
June 20, 2017

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Good afternoon, all. Mr. President, welcome to the State Department.

PRESIDENT POROSHENKO: Thank you. Thank you very much indeed.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: It's a pleasure to have you here.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, what's your response to Russia's latest actions in Syria?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: We're in discussions. Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, will you be discussing the cases of the three detained Americans in your meetings tomorrow?

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